



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

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**DOI STATEMENT ON GUILTY PLEA OF FORMER HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION  
EMPLOYEE IN THEFT OF MORE THAN \$300,000 IN PUBLIC FUNDS**

Margaret Garnett, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), issued the following statement concerning ELIANA BAUTA, a former New York City Human Resources Administration (“HRA”) Job Opportunity Specialist, who pleaded guilty to federal program theft and conspiracy to commit wire fraud and appeared today in U.S. District Court in Manhattan, in connection with the theft of over \$300,000 in funds from HRA. She is scheduled to be sentenced on July 17, 2019. Bauta has agreed to forfeit \$256,348.46, and pay an additional \$312,408.60 in restitution. DOI investigated this matter in partnership with the office of Geoffrey S. Berman, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, which is prosecuting this case.

BAUTA was charged with fraudulently issuing emergency benefits funds to relatives and acquaintances who did not qualify for the funds. BAUTA also misappropriated emergency benefits checks that were issued to actual HRA clients and provided the checks to co-conspirators who then deposited them into their own bank accounts, withdrew the funds, and shared the proceeds with BAUTA. Read about BAUTA and her co-conspirators’ arrests here:

[https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2018/Nov/ElianaBauta\\_report\\_11302018.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2018/Nov/ElianaBauta_report_11302018.pdf)

DOI Commissioner Margaret Garnett said, “This illegal conduct demonstrates the type of devastating impact corruption can have --- in this case, stealing money intended for New Yorkers in need of housing and cash assistance. This defendant is now a convicted felon and facing serious consequences as a result of her wrongdoing. The theft of public funds is not victimless, but a crime that diminishes the City’s ability to reach some of its most vulnerable. DOI thanks the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District for its partnership in this investigation.”

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Geoffrey S. Berman said, “HRA employees like Eliana Bauta are trusted to use their positions to help people in need. Instead, as she has now admitted, Bauta egregiously abused that trust, working with her co-conspirators to steal hundreds of thousands of dollars intended for New York’s needy. As the guilty pleas in this case indicate, we remain vigilant in seeking out and prosecuting abuses of trust by City employees and remain committed to ensuring that federal and local funds go to their intended recipients.”

BAUTA, 35, of the Bronx, N.Y., was arrested in November 2018 and charged with conspiracy to commit federal program theft, federal program theft, conspiracy to commit wire fraud, conspiracy to commit bank fraud and aggravated identity theft.

BAUTA was employed as a Job Opportunity Specialist with HRA since January 2008 and received an annual salary of approximately \$46,286 at the time of her resignation in May 2018.

BAUTA's co-conspirators, ERIC GONZALES, 26, of the Bronx, N.Y. and GERLADINE PEREZ, 60, of the Bronx, N.Y., were also arrested in November. GONZALES pled guilty to misdemeanor bank theft and is scheduled to be sentenced on June 20, 2019. PEREZ pled guilty to conspiracy to commit federal program theft and theft of government property and is scheduled to be sentenced on May 16, 2019.

According to the criminal complaint and DOI's investigation, beginning in approximately January 2015, BAUTA, using access to HRA systems granted to her because of her position as a Job Opportunity Specialist, caused the fraudulent issuance of emergency benefits funds to co-conspirators, including PEREZ and GONZALES, among others, who did not qualify for those funds. BAUTA also obtained access to emergency benefits checks meant for actual HRA clients in need of emergency funding and misappropriated those checks to PEREZ and GONZALES, among other associates, who deposited the checks in their own bank accounts and withdrew the funds, and then shared the proceeds with BAUTA.

DOI Commissioner Garnett thanked Geoffrey S. Berman, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and his staff, for their partnership in this investigation, in particular, Assistant United States Attorneys Paul Monteleoni and Catherine Ghosh of the Public Corruption Unit, who are prosecuting the case in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

The investigation was conducted for DOI by Special Investigators Alison Lazaro, Jeremy Reyes, and Zachary Toner, Director of Audits Laila Yu, Auditor Yanyan Wang, Director of Data Analytics Calvin Lam, Data Analyst Daisy Hui, under the supervision of First Deputy Inspector General John Bellanie, and the overall supervision of Inspector General Milton Yu and Associate Commissioner Andrew Brunsten.

*DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.*

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